

HARVEST OF THE YEARS

By
Edmund Gale Jewett

POEMS

\$1.00

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OUR LIFE, a Modern Requiem
is dedicated to the alumni of Adelphi.

“The mind creates, as great Nature does, in colors, with deep chiaroscuro and burning lights. This is true not only of poetry and essentially imaginative writing, but also of the writing which seeks nothing more than to penetrate the meaning of actual affairs—the writing of the greatest historians and philosophers, the utterances of orators and of the great masters of political exposition. Their narratives, their analyses, their appeals, their conceptions of principle, are all dipped deep in the colors of the life they expound.”

WOODROW WILSON, from *Mere Literature*.

FOREWORD

Now is our extremity. While, of necessity, the military withholds its high imperative, obedient to the latest utterance of science, and scientists in all humility acknowledge that our one remaining hope depends upon the vision and revision of political authority, statesmen of all nations and all faiths convene in truce of trust to factor out the common denominators of world unity.

The streams and tributaries of our current consciousness carve out fresh courses for their quests, and thought runs deep, uncovering values long submerged, whose disregarding has indeed been our undoing.

Words spoken softly, barely audible above the babel of more strident tongues, yet preserved, perhaps, in some form of *mere literature*, speak to us as though for the first time.

Under the prolonged stress of world peril, our faith *en masse* has followed the historical precedent, from the military to the scientific, to the political, and come once more to a long oratorical pause. Challenged by the magnitude of our necessity and unparalleled opportunity, we are silenced to a degree of concerted listening, surpassing earlier periods of heightened sensibility.

The running chord struck by the three poems presented in this volume embraces the creed of a tireless scientist with a natural gift for lyrical, dramatic, and epic expression, and a classical training for literature. As boy and man, indoors and

out, Edmund Gale Jewett has served the cause of science, in direct experiment, in his years of teaching and in the writing of texts. While the major accent of his college years fell upon Latin and Greek, the prophecy of his life's devotion to modern science was clearly articulated in his post-graduate thesis, WEATHER REPORT.

At the outset of his professional career as Director of Physical Sciences, Adelphi Academy, moved by the dire disruption of academic progress and personnel caused by the first World War, he wrote the moving poem of heroic protest, WAR LORDS, published in *The New York Times Magazine*, May 20, 1917. In the light of today's events the date is startling, not that final retribution for war crimes holds balm for civilized sensibilities *per se*, but the final apostrophe presupposing the existence of a State to which nations should be accountable, so long before its feeble beginnings, is indeed inspiring.

It is noteworthy that throughout the interval of forgetfulness between the two major crises, this one poem composed under the pressure of war psychology retained its appeal long after hostility had ceased.

The return to the epic thinking and writing of his untrammelled youth was effected through a sudden stroke of death that deprived his family of several members within a few brief hours. In the challenge of this heroic loss, he found assuagement for his grief in the re-perception of the benign in human nature, those very influences of refreshing affection and unfailing sympathy, the unbreakable ties, the indelible associations for which, indeed, he mourned so deeply, so needlessly—a re-perception intensified in retrospect beyond the clarity of its first revelation, restored for him the ideal of the human, from whose violent manifestations he had recoiled so vehemently in WAR LORDS.

The same note of compassion for priceless values cast away, for high endeavor disavowed and fair achievement sacrificed that, sounding in *WAR LORDS*, recommended the poem to later readers, resounds again in the *REQUIEM*, coming into its own in full-toned grandeur.

Contemplating the vast pattern of past development from substance to consciousness, ponderous but inexorable, he was carried by its mighty momentum through the natural order of events, by logical, transitional steps, in sequences inevitable, to the potential splendor of further future evolution, of men in that "station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them." The sweep of cosmic continuity restored his soul. He perceived that man himself shall emerge from the inertia of ignorance and fallacy, and assume control of that most volatile of forces, his own thought, and human life take on the modulation essential to symphonic performance, of which music is the forerunner and the beatitudes of religion the prophecy. In the final test of tragedy, his credo of science proved to be his religion. From the valley of the shadow he could say of its promises and precepts, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

J.P.H.

WEATHER REPORT

It is raining along the Ohio tonight.
On the broad expanse of river
There's a hiss of rain and a rush of wind,
And a wash of waves that are creeping in
Where the swaying sedges quiver.

As the thunderheads mass round the mountainous peaks
Where the Susquehanna rages,
There's a roar of cannon, a flash of spear,
And groans from the mountains that tremble in fear
As they war through countless ages.

On the Tennessee hovers a lingering mist
Rolling slowly down the mountain.
There's the restful sound of rain in the hills
And the whispers of waters in rainfed rills
As they flee their sorrowing fountains.

From the rain that is falling on meadowlands dark,
To the north of the Wabash river,
Tiny drops drip down from the tremulous leaves,
And the cattails toss in the freshening breeze,
While the sweet wild cowslips shiver.

On the Ozarks are blowing the northerly gales
With the storm before them driven,
And the mingled beams of the moon and the stars
Have broken the flying clouds with their bars,
And earth rests communing with heaven.

WAR LORDS

Drink the dregs, O Prussian War Lords.
Crush the goblet. Gone your hour.
What long years your lips were parchéd,
What long years your tongues were swollen
With the bitter thirst for power.

At your bidding, dark-browed Prussians,
Lurk your demons of the sea—
Slinking from the proffered combat,
Striking at the weak and helpless,
Symbol of your treachery.

War Lords, guised as priests and teachers,
Tares you've sown, the harvest wait—
Sown ideas of easy conquest,
Sown contempt for peaceful peoples,
Sown your blighting "Hymn of Hate."

Prostituted, O ye War Lords,
Prostituted Germany—
She was fair with art and science,
Strong in joy of youth, and gazing
Toward worldwide humanity.

Fear and hate ye have begotten,
In all peoples fear and hate—
Now in travail bow the nations,
Bringing forth the beasts that tear them,
Bearing war and bearing hate.

We will hope not, haughty Prussians,
That you get back blow for blow—
Half-men feel the lust for vengeance,
But not all your cannon mouthing,
“Man is brute,” can make it so.

There is God, oh, hollow helmet,
Granting patient hearts their crown—
Not your Moloch, God of Battles,
But the Sense of Human Kinship
You would crush and stifle down.

Oh, the pity of it, Germans—
Land to every poet dear,
Land of strong, devoted women,
Land of Luther, Land of Goethe,
Land of many a saint and seer!

Look ye, War Lords of the Nations,
“Doom” is on your palace wall—
Cry not, “Country. Glory.” Look ye:
“Kings that put their trust in terror
Abject slaves to terror fall.”

Gladiators you would make us,
Conscripts, pliant to your breath,
Slaves were trained to useful labor
In the whitening fields of cotton,
Troops to harvestings of death.

Dread World's War Lords, who can say now
That you know not what you do?
In the saint you stir the savage,
From the Christian call the caveman,
Slaughter still the suffering Jew.

Listen to the prayers, O people,
In whose hearts great love may dwell.
From the wisdom of the dying
To the highest love and wisdom
Guiding us, Immanuel.

World-wrought State, we hail thy glory,
Fair as faith that gives thee birth—
Unnamed union of all nations
Rising wisdom-crowned and mighty,
Arbiter of human justice,
Harbinger of human progress,
Hope of every seer and prophet,
From wild war shocks grim and gory
Guard and ward the tribes of earth.

OUR LIFE

A Modern Requiem

The Narrator
The Inanimate
The Animate
The Divine
The Narrator

THE NARRATOR

In memory of one beloved we gather here—
In memory of one we loved.

Some lived that would now deeply mourn,
Had they lived on;
But they feel grief no more.
Like them this one shall not again know grief,
And never pain,
And never loss or relinquishment.

And yet we come to speak a common grief,
We come to tell a common sorrow,
For we are human.

But, being human, we would have
The human vision of the larger whole.
For each, unique, in soul and sense alone,
Is set to live with others of his kind,
And then give place to them that follow after.
And each is set to live with other species
On the spreading earth,
With hillside trees and grasses of the plain,
To share a common chemistry with those that live
In dark and cold and heavy ocean deeps,
With winged birds that love the ardent sun,
And every moving thing that breathes the air.

But all of these are made of atoms, only atoms,
Intricate, numberless, intermingling atoms,
Borrowed for the moment from the inanimate.

THE INANIMATE

Find me language, mind of man.
I am space and fields of force.
I am time, ceaseless and limitless.
I am energy, boundless and infinite.
I am stuff of mountains and of stars.

Rejoice in your knowledge, O man.
Seek the way of the lightning.

Find the fringes of the garment of space.

Consider the mysteries of a dewdrop,

And the majesty of Orion.—

But not for me—

It is nothing to me that you consider.

Let another billion suns

Blaze another billion years

Beyond the ken of the conscious,

It is nothing to me—

It is not for me that you consider.

For I am energy of mass and molecule,

Energy of electron and light.

Let my Niagara whisper to your contrivances.

Let them suggest to your lamps the sun,

Energy is not lost—

Potential, kinetic—kinetic, potential—

Each instant pristine, complete,

Bound in matter or free in light.

Snatch at me with your grappling-hooks.

Scratch them on a paper.

Symbols. Symbols.

You know only symbols,

And they are all that you may know,

Unless you can walk upon the margin of the universe

Hand in hand with light.

And I.—

What have I done? What have I done?

Has colloid made conspiracy with colloid?

What is this that is neither matter nor light?

I understand the melting of the snow;

But this green leaf that turns to greet the sun,

This breathing beast that moves,

And stops, and moves again.

I understand the melting of the snow;

But why the cup of water to a child?

Why the voices and the violins?

Why the temples and the bells?

Why the sudden pallor and the tears?

I grow not old.

I neither wax nor wane.

I hasten not.

I, that am not mortal, seek no immortality.

For I am space and fields of force.

I am time, ceaseless and limitless.

I am energy, boundless and infinite.

I am stuff of mountains and of stars

THE ANIMATE

From the film of matter that makes so beautiful

The warm and nourishing earth,

Finding form in root and leaf and stem,

Finding wings for air, and fins for water,
And hooves to strike the sod,
I speak;
And my words are not words of tempest
Nor earthquake nor fiery mountain nor persistent sun.
I have responsiveness and adaptation.
I have awareness and eagerness and aspiration.
I am the Living.

Behold, O man, the multitude.

A myriad insects drift on vibrant wings
Above a sunny meadow in the South.
Another myriad creep beneath the meadow grass,
Or seek the coolness of the sheltering soil;
While high above,
A living cloud of feathered forms
Moves light and free.
And these are all in one small vale
Of the many-valleyed earth.

Behold the multitude, the multitude.

Lift for me the pages of the book of life.
Trace with childish finger the strange forms.
What have I not invented, what not tried,
That could endure this ever changing earth?
Find the crumpled pages.

Then the earth was young.
Warm was her cloudy garment with the body's warmth.
What untold years I dwelt content
Within the stormy waters of those seas,
Till I had learned to drink like ruddy wine
The strong effulgence of th' increasing sun.
For me then came the rising rocks,
The winds, the rains.
For me warm seas of Silurian time.
For me unmeasured swamp lands, league on league.
By day, by night the lightning lashed
The lazy nitrogen to toil,
While I with mighty labor locked
The vagrant carbon in his dungeon dark.
Days flashed for me, and years were gone.
At length, O long ago, came clearer air,
Came uplands of the Mesozoic time,
Cool seas, and far, unclouded skies.

Now why should man,
On flimsy pages,
Try to write
My epic that already lies
Long-etched within the rock?
I am mistrustful of the mind of man,
And what it writes.
Have I not seen on red'ning altar slain

His dearest to sadistic deities?
Have I not seen the packs that hunt the packs,
And drive from homes destroyed with minds distraught
The peaceful folk?
I am mistrustful of the human mind.
Yet I have sometime seen it touch,
With tender and creative love,
The petals of the poppy and the rose.

Consider, O man, the continuity of the living,
The infinite succession of cells, my abode,
The reproductive cells eternally repeated,
In each the gathered skein, the split threads, the living strands,
The mystic ritual of cell union—
Ovum and sperm cell, sperm and ovum—
For both a perfect preparation,
For both an intricate commingling—
Always the endless lottery,
Always the careful accounting.

Consider, O man, the marvel of growth,
The potent single cell, the varied many cells—
Division and growth, growth and division—
In each the gathered skein, the split threads, the living strands,
Each cell imparting to succeeding cells the plan,
The marvelous memory, the subtle chemistry,
The twain in aspect, mind and matter.

Turn back the pages of a single life,
Before there's comliness or light of day,
Of reptile, bird, or mammal, yes, of man.—
How strange that each should write the symbol of the sea,
Some long-remembered line of life's long saga write,
While sleep the fossil fish within the rock,
A million and a million centuries concealed.

Behold the mystery.
Behold the multitude.
I am the living.

THE DIVINE

Paint me my portrait, O man.
Stretch on a frame the fabric of remembrances.
Choose the strong colors of thy mother's love,
The devotion of thy dearest,
The comfort of kindred minds,
And all thine own most burning aspirations.
Paint with free and bold stroke.—
I like thy painting, O man.
Though the colors fade into the fabric,
Thou hast done well.
Thou wilt do better tomorrow,
For I am ever yet to be portrayed.

Think not by prophet's word or golden altar
Thou canst exalt me.
I am exalted by courageous joy,
By righteous judgments, and by noble deeds.
These are, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord."

Consider and discern.
Believe and behold.
I am a child's prayer,
A saint's purpose, a sinner's anguish,
The sympathy of all for all bereaved.

Cease thy clamor, man, and thou shalt hear
Strains of endless music.
Tune thy soul to be aware
Of my multitudinous orchestra.
Hear the triumphant trumpet tones
Of them that have kept faith in life.
Hear the weaving melody of the violin.
They cherish beauty in the soul.
Hear the sounding and resounding bass
From brass and strings and drum.
These hearts hold courage though all else may fail.
Hearken to the flute, the love-note,
The aspiring clarinet, the joyful horn.
Give ear to the crescendo of my coming,
For I am the harmony of the whole
Of all unwavering notes

Unto each be the joy of his own refrain
In the glory of the whole.

THE NARRATOR

We are human, and we mourn our dead.
They had their day, their little day.—

They will not know, as we must know,
The menace of the constant-tugging earth,
Nor wrecking winds, nor river's overflow,
Nor scorching heat, nor all-benumbing cold;
Nor will they feel against the body's health
The insidious onslaught of some hidden swarm;
Nor know the day by day relinquishment of youth.

Still other griefs they will not share with us:
The choice that seemed most fair and right
But proved in the event to be unwise,
The love that would give all for love
But brings not blessing to the one beloved,
The weakness and infirmity
When one has need for strength,
Frustrations, failures, and despondencies.

Nor need they see, as we must see,
Two mighty armies dealing death by night,

Crime and the punishment of criminals,
Poverty in the midst of plenty,
And all the strange insanities and inhumanities of man—
Brutal, blundering, bewildered man.
They are absolved—
They are absolved from seeing these.

We hear fond hopes of immortality.
We hear strange tales of the elusive mind.
But yet we find sustaining thought in this:
Today so many in their lives
Find peace and joy and happiness.
Tomorrow—tomorrow for mankind
Begins a nobler million years.
So we may believe,
And so endure
The still recurring grief,
When morning comes,
And one who loved it well
Does not awake;
Evening, and is not aware.

Supremely beautiful upon the reeling earth
Arose the fragile palace of a human life,
Made of memories inwrought with memories,
Rising as on a summer day a summer cloud,
Radiant with the light of hope,
Eager for the splendor of living,

And we, beholding it, rejoiced.
A little while it made our world more fair.
Tomorrow will not find it.
Even today it is not.
Blessed are beautiful memories.
And blessed are they that remember the beautiful.
Even though they mourn,
Blessed are they that remember.

